

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:
  - a) sending a status message from an access server to a gateway adapted to support signaling from a plurality of access servers, the access server being coupled to a data network and a telephone switch via a telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone switch and the data network, the gateway being coupled to the access server and the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit signaling information between the telephone switch and the access server; and
  - b) acknowledging to the access server that the status message was received, the status message specifying capabilities of the access server.
2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein sending a status message from the access server to the gateway comprises sending a status message from the access server to the gateway that indicates the access server is operational.
3. (Cancelled).
4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein acknowledging to the access server that the status message was received comprises sending a status acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates the status message was received.
5. (original) The method of claim 4, wherein sending a status acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates the status message was received comprises sending a status acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates the status message was received and that the gateway allows the access server to receive calls.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein sending a status acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server indicates the status message was received comprises sending a status acknowledgment message from the gateway to the access server that indicates the status message was received and that the gateway allows the access server to generate calls.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending an interface status message from the access server to the gateway to register at least one interface on the access server that is available to receive user information from the telephone switch.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising sending an interface status acknowledgement from the gateway to the access server in response to receiving the an interface status message.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein sending the interface status message from the access server to the gateway to register at least one interface on the access server that is available to receive user information from the telephone switch comprises sending the interface status message from the access server to the gateway to register at least one interface on the access server that is available to receive user information from the telephone switch and to provide status on at least one channel on the interface.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising sending a service message from the access server to the gateway upon a change of state in one of the interfaces and channels.

11. (original) The method of claim 10, further comprising sending a service message from the gateway to the access server to request a change in the status of one or the at least one interfaces and channels on the access server.

12. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:
- a) sending a continuity check message from a gateway to an access server, the access server being coupled to a data network and a telephone switch via a telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone switch and the data network, the gateway being scalable to support signaling from a plurality of access servers including the access server, the gateway being coupled to the access server and the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit signaling information between the telephone switch and the access server; and
  - b) sending a continuity check result message from the access server to the gateway, the continuity check result message to report a result of a continuity check for a channel supported by the access server.

13. (original) The method of claim 12, further comprising sending a continuity check result acknowledgment message from the gateway to the access server in response to sending a continuity check result message from the access server to the gateway.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
- a telephone switch;
  - a data network ;
  - a plurality of access servers coupled to the data network via a telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone switch and the data network, at least one of the plurality of access servers to send means for sending a status message from an access server to a gateway, the status message that comprises a first field including information to indicate whether the access server is operational and information a second field to specify capabilities of the access server, wherein the access server being coupled to a data network and a telephone switch via a telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone switch and the data network,;
  - a the gateway being coupled to the plurality of access server servers and the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium, the gateway to transmit signaling

information between the telephone switch and the plurality of access servers and to acknowledge receipt of the status message; and

~~means for acknowledging to the access server that the status message was received.~~

15-20. (cancelled).

21. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for sending the status message further comprising means for sending an interface status message from the access server to the gateway, the interface status message including information for the gateway to register at least one interface on the access server that is available to receive user information from the telephone switch.

22. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the means for sending the interface status message further includes information providing status on at least one channel on the at least one interface.

23. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the means for sending the status message further comprising means for sending a service message from the access server to the gateway upon a change of state in the at least one interface.

24. (New) A method comprising:

- a) receiving status messages from a first access server of a plurality of access servers interconnected to a gateway, each of the plurality of access servers being coupled to a data network and a telephone switch via a telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone switch and the data network, the gateway being coupled to the plurality of access servers and the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit signaling information between the telephone switch and the plurality of access servers; and
- b) acknowledging receipt of the status message to the first access server.